

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) released the following statement in response to tonight's speech by President Bush on the War in Iraq:

"Tonight's announcement by President Bush that we need begin bringing home some of our troops is a long overdue step in the right direction, and I believe an acknowledgement that he is finally listening to the America people.

"Unfortunately, the President has left the American public with no clearer a picture on the direction of the war in Iraq than we had after General Petraeus' testimony before Congress earlier this week.

"Some basic questions remain unanswered: What does the President hope to achieve with keeping troop levels in Iraq through next summer? What is the plan for building a functional and stable government? How are we going to build international coalitions in the Middle East to help the fledgling government stave off intervention from rogue and menacing forces?

"The President's plan to reduce troop levels to merely pre-surge levels at the end of next year is not enough -- that timeline is the natural result of a necessity created by this Administration's blatant disregard for the growing troop readiness crisis that worsens daily.

"Furthermore, a recent independent GAO report on progress in Iraq makes it clear that the Iraqi government has failed to meet 15 of 18 benchmarks for success -- essentially, demonstrating the President's failure to produce a clear plan to win the peace. According to the President's own benchmarks, there has been no political progress in Iraq, a fundamental component to completing our mission in Iraq and bringing our troops home safely.

"The American public deserves more than political promises and one-liners. Americans want - and deserve - an honest assessment of the situation in Iraq and a plan for success."

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